the operating system wielding, at increasingly critical memory thresholds, [wielding] correspondingly increasing [operating system] control over said one or more application programs to reduce memory usage.

2.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the wielding increasing operating system control comprises:

at a less critical memory threshold, communicating a request to at least one of the application programs for the at least one application program to limit its use of memory; and

at a more critical memory threshold, terminating at least one of the application programs without allowing its further execution.

3.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the wielding increasing operating system control comprises:

prompting a user to select at least one of the application programs and then the operating system requesting that the at least one selected application program close itself.

4.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the wielding increasing operating system control comprises:

prompting a user to select at least one of the application programs and then terminating it without allowing its further execution.

5.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the wielding increasing operating system control comprises:

at a first memory threshold, requesting at least one of the application programs to limit its use of memory;

at a second memory threshold, requesting at least one of the application programs to close itself; and

at a third memory threshold, terminating at least one of the application programs without allowing its further execution.

6.   (Twice Amended) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the wielding increasing operating system control comprises:

at a first memory threshold, requesting at least one of the application programs to limit its use of memory;

at a second memory threshold, prompting a user to [designate] select at least one of the application programs and then requesting it to close itself; and

at a third memory threshold, prompting the user to [designate] select at least one of the application programs and then terminating it without allowing its further execution.

7.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

at one or more of the memory thresholds, reclaiming unused stack memory.

8.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

at one or more of the memory thresholds, discarding read-only memory.

9.   (Previously Amended) A computer-readable storage medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 1.

10.   (Previously Amended) A computer-readable storage medium having instructions for controlling memory usage in a computer system having limited physical memory, wherein one or more application programs execute in conjunction with an operating system, the instructions being executable by the computer system to perform acts comprising:

at a first memory usage threshold, requesting at least one of the application programs to close itself; and

at a second memory usage threshold that is more critical than the first memory usage threshold, terminating at least one of the application programs without allowing its further execution.

11.   (Previously Amended) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 10, the instructions being executable to perform additional acts comprising:

before performing the requesting step, prompting a user to select one of the application programs to be closed; and

before performing the terminating step, prompting the user to select one of the application programs to be terminated.

12.   (Previously Amended) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 10, the instructions being executable to perform additional acts comprising:

before performing the requesting step, requiring a user to select one of the application programs to be closed; and

before performing the terminating step, requiring the user to select one of the application programs to be terminated.

13.   (Previously Amended)   A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 10, the instructions being executable to perform an additional act comprising:

at a further memory threshold that is less critical than the first and second memory usage thresholds, requesting at least one of the application programs to limit its use of memory.

14.   (Previously Amended)   A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 10, the instructions being executable to perform an additional act comprising:

reclaiming unused stack memory before requesting at least one of the application programs to close itself and before terminating at least one of the application programs.

15.   (Previously Amended)   A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 10, the instructions being executable to perform an additional act comprising:

discarding read-only memory before requesting at least one of the application programs to close itself and before terminating at least one of the application programs.

16. (Previously Amended) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 10, the instructions being executable to perform additional acts comprising:

reclaiming unused stack memory and discarding read-only memory before requesting at least one of the application programs to close itself and before terminating at least one of the application programs.

17. (Previously Amended) A method of controlling memory usage in a computer system having limited physical memory, wherein one or more application programs execute in conjunction with an operating system, the method comprising:

at a first memory usage threshold, requesting at least one of the application programs to limit its use of memory;

at a second memory usage threshold that is more critical than the first memory usage threshold, requesting at least one of the application programs to close itself;

at a third memory usage threshold that is more critical than the first and second memory usage thresholds, terminating at least one of the application programs without allowing its further execution; and

reclaiming unused stack memory and discarding read-only memory before requesting at least one of the application programs to close itself and before terminating at least one of the application programs.

18.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 17, wherein the reclaiming and discarding are performed at further memory usage thresholds that are set in relation to the second and third memory usage thresholds.

19.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 17, wherein the reclaiming and discarding are performed at further memory usage thresholds that are set in relation to the first, second, and third memory usage thresholds.

20.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 17, further comprising:

before performing the requesting, prompting a user to select one of the application programs to be closed; and

before performing the terminating, prompting the user to select one of the application programs to be terminated.

21.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 17, further comprising:

before performing the requesting, requiring a user to select one of the application programs to be closed; and

before performing the terminating, requiring the user to select one of the application programs to be terminated.

22.   (Previously Amended) A computer-readable storage medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 17.

23. (Previously Amended) A computer system comprising:

a processor;

an operating system that is executable by the processor and that utilizes the physical memory;

a virtual memory system that includes physical memory but does not include secondary storage;

one or more application programs that utilize the virtual memory system;

wherein the operating system is configured to perform the following acts:

monitoring physical memory usage; and

at increasingly critical physical memory usage thresholds, wielding increasing control over said one or more application programs to reduce physical memory usage.

24. (Previously Amended) A computer system as recited in claim 23, wherein the act of wielding increasing control comprises the following acts:

at a less critical memory threshold, communicating a request to at least one of the application programs for the at least one application program to limit its use of memory; and

at a more critical memory threshold, terminating at least one of the application programs without allowing its further execution.

25. (Previously Amended) A computer system as recited in claim 23, wherein the act of wielding increasing control comprises the following act:

prompting a user to select at least one of the application programs and then the operating system requesting that the at least one selected application program close itself.

26. (Previously Amended) A computer system as recited in claim 23, wherein the act of wielding increasing control comprises the following act:

prompting a user to select at least one of the application programs and then terminating it without allowing its further execution.

27. (Previously Amended) A computer system as recited in claim 23, wherein the act of wielding increasing control comprises the following acts :

at a first memory threshold, requesting at least one of the application programs to limit its use of memory;

at a second memory threshold, requesting at least one of the application programs to close itself; and

at a third memory threshold, terminating at least one of the application programs without allowing its further execution.

28. (Twice Amended) A computer system as recited in claim 23, wherein the act of wielding increasing control comprises the following acts:

at a first memory threshold, requesting at least one of the application programs to limit its use of memory;

at a second memory threshold, prompting a user to [designate] select at least one of the application programs and then requesting it to close itself; and

at a third memory threshold, prompting the user to [designate] <u>select</u> at least one of the application programs and then terminating it without allowing its further execution.

29. (Previously Amended) A computer system as recited in claim 23, wherein the operating system is further configured to perform the following additional act:

at one or more of the memory thresholds, reclaiming unused stack memory.

30. (Previously Amended) A computer system as recited in claim 23, wherein the operating system is further configured to perform the following additional act:

at one or more of the memory thresholds, discarding read-only memory.

31. (Previously Amended) A computer system as recited in claim 23, wherein the act of wielding increasing control comprises the following acts:

at a first memory threshold, requesting at least one of the application programs to limit its use of memory;

at a second memory threshold, prompting a user to select at least one of the application programs and then requesting that the at least one selected application program close itself;

at a third memory threshold, prompting the user to select at least one of the application programs and then terminating it without allowing its further execution; and

before prompting the user, reclaiming unused stack memory and discarding read-only memory.

32.   (Previously Amended) A method of controlling memory usage in a computer system having limited physical memory, wherein one or more application programs execute in conjunction with an operating system, the method comprising:

monitoring memory usage; and

when memory usage is high, sending a message from the operating system to at least one of the application programs requesting the application program to reduce its current use of memory.

33.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 32, further comprising sending the message to the application program when memory usage reaches a defined threshold.

34.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 32, wherein the application programs have respective message loops, the method further comprising sending the message to the application program through its message loop.

35.   (Previously Amended) A method as recited in claim 32, wherein the application programs have respective message loops, the method further comprising sending the message to a particular application program that was least recently active.

36.   (Previously Amended) A computer-readable storage medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 32.

37.   (Previously Amended) A computer-readable storage medium having instructions for controlling memory usage in a computer system having limited physical memory, wherein one or more application programs execute in conjunction with an operating system, the instructions being executable by the computer system to perform acts comprising:

monitoring memory usage; and

at a defined memory usage threshold, sending a message from the operating system to at least one of the application programs requesting the application program to reduce its current use of memory.

38.   (Previously Amended) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 37, wherein the application programs have respective message loops, the instructions being executable to perform a further act of sending the message to the application program through its message loop.

39.   (Previously Amended) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 37, wherein the application programs have respective message loops, the instructions being executable to perform a further act of sending the message to a particular application program that was least recently active.

40.   (Previously Amended)   An application program that resides in a computer-readable memory for execution by a processor in conjunction with an operating system, the application program having a message loop that receives messages from an operating system, the application program being responsive to a particular message received through its message loop to reduce its current use of memory.